

LEIGHTON BUZZARD.

TO THE
CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS
OF THE
URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.



GENTLEMEN,

It is my pleasure to lay before you my Annual Report for the year just closed, 1902. In one respect (a very important one)—namely, as to Notifications of Infectious Disease, it compares very favourably with preceding years.

Only nine cases of Infectious Disease came before my notice during the year; two of them being the malign one of Small-pox (both however being tramps, and so were imported—not belonging to the town. There was one Diphtheria in a child of twelve years of age

in a slum part of the town. Two cases of Scarlet Fever, one a child of three—impossible to trace causation; the other in a youth of seventeen, who came home ill from Watford. Two sporadic cases of Erysipelas in adults, and two of Typhoid—the one of which was fatal, dying in the Urban Isolation Hospital at Grovebury; this was the only fatal case in all the nine.

There were two cases of Influenza, an infectious though non-notifiable disease, of which one was fatal. One death from Diarrhœa in a very young child. Five from Phthisis and eight from kindred tubercular diseases. Of the fell disease, Cancer; death claimed four cases—Bronchitis, nine—the sister disease, Pneumonia, ten cases—Liver Disease, two.

Three deaths from Premature Birth, also one death in severe parturition.

Heart Disease, a very prevalent one in this age of strain claimed the high quota of twelve victims. From accidents two deaths resulted. From all other causes not required by the Local Government Board to be classified, forty-two deaths.

Altogether, a hundred and three deaths have to be recorded, giving an average of 16·26 per thousand—slightly lower than last year—there being only one death from Notifiable Disease (namely that from Typhoid Fever as before mentioned;) gives a Zymotic rate of only 0·15 per thousand. Influenza—one death—gives the same, whilst from Phthisis—five deaths—0·58.

Deaths of children under a year old, fourteen ; giving a rate per thousand births registered of 84·39 per thousand, comparing favourably with 1901, when it was 238.

Taking deaths from respiratory diseases altogether, we find it works out at 3·7, comparing favourably with 4·4 in 1901 ; but unfavourably with years 1899 and 1900, when it was 2·4—a proportion that is too high, owing probably to dampness, a subject on which I have dwelt in previous annual Reports, as being to some extent at all events, preventible ; and compares but ill with Dunstable, where it was as low as 0·7, but which town stands on much higher ground.

Births have been 148, an average of 28·42 per thousand of the population, comparing favourably with 13·26 of previous year 1901.

Upon looking back over the past two years since the notification was begun, it can readily be seen how great has been the falling off in *Zymotic* cases. This I attribute to the better hygienic condition of the town ; owing—firstly, to the excellent water-supply ; secondly, the numerous connections made to the Council's sewerage scheme ; and thirdly, the adoption of scavenging.

It may too here be stated that the Sanitary Inspector and myself have given our persistent attention to the recognition and abatement of nuisances, and the prevention of their re-occurrence ; and both in season and out of season to urge upon owners of property the necessity, or at all events, the very great desirability of making connections.

I may safely say that 95 per cent. of the houses are now connected, and the Council have only had to take one case into Court to press for connections, and when the order was obtained and the Council commenced the work under the direction of the Surveyor, the owner, seeing the work was well in hand, asked if he might finish it himself when permission was given — and the work was duly executed to the Surveyor's satisfaction.

I may add that whenever a notification is given or a nuisance is reported, it is at once attended to by the Inspector and myself jointly, and a joint report presented to the Sanitary Committee, and in its turn subsequently to the Urban Council itself. The Markets, Slaughter-houses, Bakehouses, and Lodging-houses have our constant attention.

With regard to the Factory and Workshops Act which came into operation last year, fifty-one inspections have been made and result found satisfactory.

OUTFALL WORKS.

Alterations from the International into the Bacterial method with Candy's Sprinklers were commenced in March and finished about the end of July, the whole of the work being carried out by Mr. Stewart, who has also paid special attention to the doing away of pumping the detritus from the deep well.

The method is simple, and whenever the tanks are emptied it saves a great amount of labour on the former method of pumping the sludge, which I have previously reported was not fit for manual labour. The Council had intended to adopt mechanical power, but

the present system does not require any such contrivance, but is simplified by taking off the floating drum and allowing the sludge to flow into the dry lagoons, and when there for a few weeks it becomes dry and odourless, and can be carted from the works without any unpleasantness.

The present system saves expense in chemicals, besides doing away with the carting of sludge which used to amount to ten loads a day. There has been no such carting away of sludge now for a period of over a year, and this constitutes one of the best Sanitary Reforms that the Council has made. I have taken a very constant interest in all this improvement, and have noted how the London County Council under the advice of Professor Clowes and other great authorities, are adopting the Bacterial plan ; so it seems our Council is determined to keep up to date as to serving the Public in the best possible manner.

The number of persons who have visited the Lodging-houses during the past year has been as many as 11,067 males and 3,420 females, making a total of 14,487, being an increase of 1,714 persons on the previous year, 1901—when it was 12,773 ; previous year to that—namely, 1900, it stood at 8,369. Should this state of things go on, no doubt some remedy will have to be made out and adopted. I should state here that the Lodging-houses have been carefully measured as to their capacity in cubic air-space, and we found that at no one time were they over-taxed by the existing number of inmates. This vast number of vagrants visiting our town is, however, by no means a source of congratulation, as experience has clearly shown that it is this tramping population that carry the Small-pox infection.

The Council have had to isolate a man who had not fully recovered from an attack of Small-pox. Why was this man allowed to leave—not only one, but successively, two other Unions, and go tramping about the country at his own sweet will, in an uncured and thus dangerously infective condition ?

He was seen by the County Medical Officer, who confirmed the diagnosis of Small-pox and approved the Local Authority in detaining him for the necessary period till cured ; but no sooner was this case discharged (at least, after a very short interval) than my attention was called to another tramp then in the vagrant wards at the Union House. I had him moved at once to our new Small-pox Hospital, which has thus amply justified its existence in the interests of the community by isolating two cases, both tramps. The tramp question is a difficult one, but its danger to the community is sufficiently and indeed startlingly obvious to suggest the necessity for some remedy, if any can be found. I am happy to add that no further case has occurred.

Some years ago, constant complaints were made as to the sewer gases emanating from the street manholes. In dealing with this matter, the Council had some high ventilating columns fixed at certain points where the nuisance as above described was particularly manifest, and the Inspector thought that if the dead ends of branch sewers were connected with the main trunk sewers, thereby insuring a better circulation, it would help ; this plan was also carried into effect, with the result that no more complaints have been made to the Council, thus setting forth the success of the remedial action above described.

Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4, as required by the Local Government Board have been duly made out and forwarded.

I remain, Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

J. A. HEDGES,

Medical Officer.

